



The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

U.S. Senator Jefferson Davis to U.S. Revenue Cutter Service Officer

Jefferson Davis Free Frank

The envelope shown in Figure 1 bears the free frank of then-U.S. Senator Jefferson Davis with “U.S.S.” on the line below his signature. As a senator, Davis enjoyed the free franking privilege that allowed him to send mail without paying postage. At left is a Washington, D.C. “Free Feb 14, 1860,” circular datestamp.

Jefferson Finis Davis (1808-89), photographed in 1861 by famed Civil War photographer Mathew Brady, is shown in Figure 2 (Library of Congress).

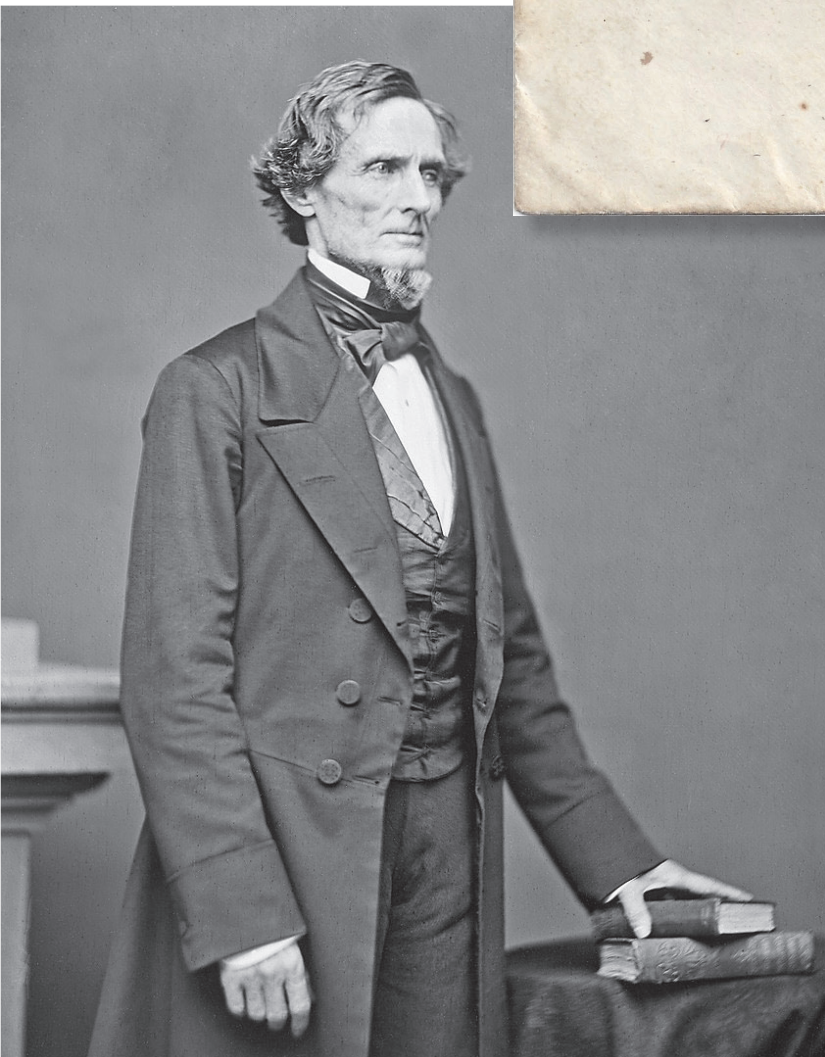
Preceded by a term in the U.S. House of Representatives from Kentucky’s At Large District 1845-46, Davis was the 23rd U.S. Secretary of War 1853-57. He was a United States Senator



Figure 1 (above). This envelope bears the free frank of then-U.S. Senator Jefferson Davis; at left is a Washington, D.C., “Free Feb 1 1860” CDS; the addressee is “Lieut. Jos. Amazeen U.S. Revenue Service, Portland Me.”

Figure 2 (left). CSA President Jefferson Davis as photographed in 1861 by Mathew Brady. (Library of Congress).

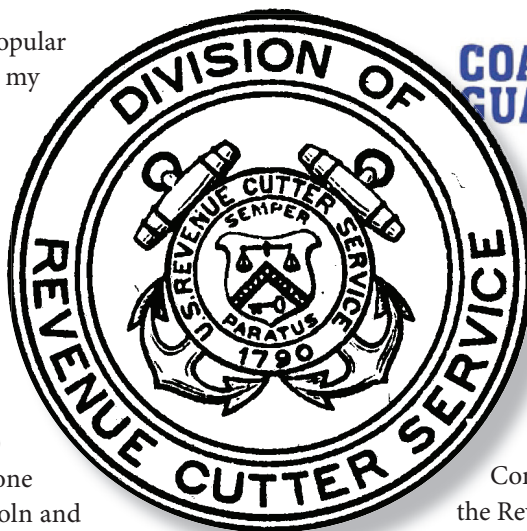
from Mississippi in office from 1847-51, and again 1857-61. Davis was also a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and served six years in the U.S. Army as a lieutenant during the Mexican-American War as a colonel of a volunteer regiment. He had devoted his life to the United States. But on Jan. 21, 1861, which Davis called, “the saddest day of my life,” he delivered a farewell address to the United States Senate, resigned and returned to Mississippi. In less than a month, on Feb. 9, he was elected president of the Provisional Government of the Confederacy. On Nov. 6, 1861, he was elected president of the Confederate States of America, simply confirming the decision made earlier in the year. He was the only person to serve as president of the Confederacy.



Despite the attractive and popular Davis free frank, what captured my attention on this envelope was the address. It was directed to "Lieut. Jos. Amazeen, U.S. Revenue Service, Portland, Me." The surname was not easy to decipher. It looked to me more like "Amuzren."

Portland, Maine, didn't seem to make sense for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) either – because it wasn't. For one thing, although President Lincoln and the U.S. Congress did create the IRS to pay for Civil War expenses, it did not originate until July 1, 1862. The envelope was used in 1860, more than two years earlier. Also, why would it be addressed to Maine instead of Washington, D.C.?

Then there was the military title of lieutenant. That is what tipped the scales for me. I couldn't find anyone with a similar name in the U.S. Army, nor in the Navy. In the dark recesses of my mind, I remembered the United States Revenue Cutter



Service (USRCS), the predecessor to today's U.S. Coast Guard. It did not first leap to mind, although maybe it should have.

United States Revenue Cutter Service

The USRCS was established by an act of Congress on Aug. 4, 1790. It was informally called the Revenue-Marine upon the commendation of Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury. It was to serve as an armed customs enforcement service, but it evolved into much more. It is one of the six branches of the U.S. military.

Academics of American history often slight the importance of the United States Coast Guard and its predecessors. The revenue cutters not only carried out their many peace-

Figure 3 (above). The seal of the United States Revenue Cutter Service.
Figure 4 (above right). The seal of the United States Coast Guard.



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Figure 5 (above). Unattributed image of the explosion of the *Caleb Cushing* June 27, 1863.

Figure 6 (left). Confederate Navy Lt. Charles W. Read, known as the "Seawolf of the Confederacy."



time duties but worked with the Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Survey (part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more often referred to by the acronym of NOAA) to bring the Civil War to its conclusion.

The service had no official name until 1863. In the interim, it was unofficially called the Revenue-Marine, the United States Revenue Service and the United States Revenue Marine Service. It was President Abraham Lincoln who called it the "Revenue Cutter Service" shortly before it was officially referred to as the "United States Revenue Cutter Service" by Congress in 12. Stat. 639, Feb. 4, 1863.

The seal of the USRC is shown in Figure 3. For those unfamiliar with maritime lingo, a cutter is a small or medium-size boat or sailing ship with a shallow draft built for speed.

The Revenue Cutter Service operated under the authority

of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. On Jan. 28, 1915, the service was merged by an act of Congress with the United States Life-Saving Service to form the United States Coast Guard. The USCG seal, incorporating their motto *Semper Paratus*, is shown in Figure 4. The Latin *Semper Paratus* translates to "Always Prepared" or "Always Ready" (to preserve and protect the United States). The motto's origin is in dispute as to year and origin; there are several stories of its evolution.

Revenue Cutter *Harriet Lane* forced the merchant steamer *Nashville* to show her colors during the attack on Fort Sumter by firing a shot across her bow April 12, 1861. Thus, a revenue cutter fired the first naval shot of the Civil War outside Charleston Harbor.

The Confederates captured her in 1863, whereupon she was converted to mercantile service. Union forces recovered her in Havana at the end of the war.

Union Lt. Joseph Amazeen and the Caleb Cushing

The Historical Register of U.S Revenue Cutter Service Officers 1790-1914 finally led me to Lt. Joseph Amazeen, who first joined the service April 13, 1837, as a third lieutenant.

By 1860, Lt. Amazeen was commanding the *Caleb Cushing*, with a homeport of Portland, Maine. The *Cushing* spent most of her time in Maine. In 1860, she was boarding and examining as many as 30 cargo and fishing vessels a day, assisting in the service of lighthouses, putting down mutinies aboard vessels in Portland and answering other distress calls.

Capt. Green Walden, a veteran of the service, had commanded *Cushing* since she was launched in July 1853, but in November 1860 his health failed. The command then transferred to first Lt. Amazeen in December.

In the introduction to *Anatomy of a Revenue Cutter: The History of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing*, author Michael Strauss describes *Cushing* as the only revenue cutter captured and destroyed by Confederates during the Civil War (June 26, 1863).

Figure 7. Federal 1860 census of Portland, N.H., listing the Amazeen family.

Page No. 111

SCHEDULE 1 - Free Inhabitants in Portland, New Hampshire, in the County of Rockingham, State of New Hampshire, enumerated by me, on the 1st day of June, 1860, James M. Wood, Ass't Marshal. Post Office Portland, N.H.

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Color	Occupation	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate	Place of Birth	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict
811	Joseph Amazeen	M	47	W	Seaman	2000	1000	New Hampshire	
	Mary E. Amazeen	F	39	W					
	Joseph	M	26	W					
	Harriet	F	18	W					
	Charles B.	M	9	W					
	Margaret Lynch	F	27	W	Domestic			Maine	
812	Robert Whison	M	61	W	Merchant	3000	1800	New Hampshire	
	Ann E. Whison	F	55	W					
	Anna Whison	F	28	W					
	Ernest Holden	M	23	W	Domestic			Maine	
813	William H. Wood	M	30	W	Book Binder	1000	800	New Hampshire	
	James C.	M	16	W					
	Charles B.	M	5	W					
	James Tuttle	M	50	W	Domestic				
814	Elizabeth Thibault	F	44	W	Seamstress			Maine	
	William A.	M	20	W				Maine	
	Joseph A.	M	15	W					
	Joseph	M	13	W					
	Joseph	M	11	W					
	Frank	M	9	W					
	Ellen Harley	F	19	W	Domestic			Maine	
815	Edgar H. Hunt	M	65	W		5000		New Hampshire	
	Joseph B. Hunt	M	63	W					
	Ellen B. Hunt	F	60	W					
	Ellen Hennessey	F	20	W	Domestic			Maine	
816	William H. Chase	M	41	W	Physician	1000		Maine	
	Ann Maria Chase	F	38	W					
	John Chase	M	31	W					
	Mary Chase	F	25	W	Domestic			New Hampshire	
817	Franklin Parker	M	58	W		5000			
	Mary S. Parker	F	25	W				New York	
	William S. Parker	M	20	W				New Hampshire	
	Margaret Parker	F	17	W	Domestic			Maine	
	Caroline S. Parker	F	13	W				New York	
818	John S. Dodge	M	63	W	Book Binder	2000	1000	New Hampshire	
	Ann S. Dodge	F	44	W					
	Anna M.	F	14	W					
	Fizzie M.	F	10	W					

On Jan. 1, 1861, Lt. Amazeen reported the poor condition of his vessel to the U.S. Treasury Department, stating he considered it unsafe. He is also quoted as saying:

The armament of the vessel is comparatively useless ... the 9-pound cannonade, a chambered gun ... has rusted in the chamber causing it to hang fire ... it is not considered safe in firing a salute or any number of guns in quick succession ... the muskets have been condemned as worthless ... the pistols and cutlasses are in good order ... but more for ornament than use.

Lt. Amazeen had been a loyal officer since 1837. But he was charged with having refused to hoist the National Ensign on the *Cushing*. Amazeen had deemed it unnecessary in a specific instance. On May 22, 1861, he was suspended from command until further orders. On Jan. 9, 1862, he was reduced to second lieutenant. He was recommissioned first lieutenant July 1, 1863, and promoted to captain July 11, 1864.

According to the records of the U.S. Treasury Department, during the rebellion he first served on the *Cushing*. From April 1862 to June 1863, he served on the *Black*, stationed in Boston; June 1863 to June 1864 on the *Agassiz* and *Forward* in the inland waters of North Carolina; June 1864 to September 1864 on the *Pawtuxet* out of New York and, from September 1864 to the close of the war, again, on the *Agassiz* out of New Bedford, Mass.

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What do you collect?

CSA Navy Lt. Charles W. Read; the “Seawolf of the Confederacy”

The *Caleb Cushing* was overrun June 27, 1863, by a Confederate raiding party as she sat at dock in Portland the largest port in Maine. The Rebels, led by CSA Navy Lt. Charles W. Read, had slipped into Portland Harbor on a fishing vessel they had earlier captured off Damariscove Island, near Portland. They boarded the *Cushing* and subdued the unsuspecting crew, half of whom were on liberty attending to the laying out of their former captain, George Clark, who had just died after being ill for several months.

The Rebels sailed out again, taking both the fishing boat and the *Cushing*, with her captured crew in handcuffs. When the raid was discovered, two vessels gave chase and a brief battle ensued, at which time the Rebels unshackled the crew, put them into a small boat and set fire to the *Cushing*. The gunpowder aboard exploded, and she went to her watery grave while the crew made good their escape. The aftermath is shown in Figure 5 in an unattributed image.

From private boats, numerous Portland residents collected souvenirs from the debris of the destroyed ship, some of which were contributed to the Maine Historical Society. They include wood fragments, handcuffs and a U.S. Treasury emblem. These treasures are pictured on the Maine Memory Network website.

Lt. Read, shown in Figure 6, was captured with his crew.

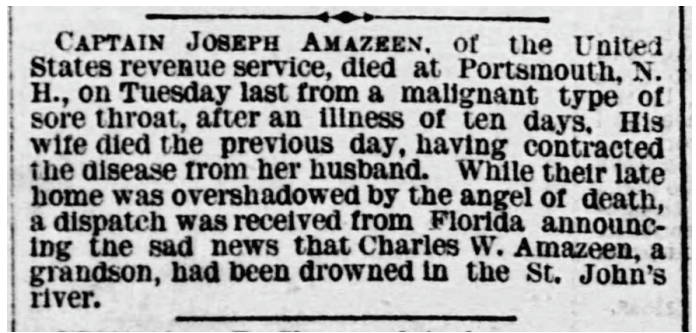


Figure 8. Unattributed newspaper clipping announcing the death of Capt. and Mrs. Amazeen and one of their grandsons.

They were held at Fort Warren, Boston Harbor, Mass. Read was exchanged Oct. 18, 1864. During his raiding mission from June 6, 1863, to June 27, 1863, Read captured or destroyed 22 United States vessels, for which he was posthumously recognized with the Confederate Medal of Honor.

Lt. Read would later learn that on June 26, 1863, a total of 47 armed vessels were actively pursuing him and his men. A single Union lieutenant and 21 sailors raised a ruckus in every harbor and port from the Chesapeake to Maine over the course of 20 days in pursuit of them.

Lt. Charles William “Savez” Read (1840-90), a native of Mississippi, was an Annapolis graduate, class of 1860. He resigned his U.S. Navy commission in 1861 to serve his native South. He offered a bold and daring plan to his superiors, requesting the opportunity to harass and raid federal commerce along the eastern seaboard. The U.S., not surprisingly, considered him more of a pirate or privateer, but he legally served the Confederate Navy. If a pirate, he would have been immediately hanged upon capture instead of taken prisoner.

Capt. Joseph Amazeen’s Last Days

Capt. Joseph Amazeen (1813-80) was born in New Castle, N.H. He married Mary Elizabeth Moran Amazeen (1815-80) in 1833. They had four children, including a son who died at age 10. Page 121 of the Portland, N.H., 1860 federal census, shown in Figure 7, lists the family and an Irish domestic living with them. It shows Joseph as 47 years old and Mary Elizabeth as 34 years old, while the tombstone lists her as born in 1815. My bet is on the tombstone being correct. Likely, the census taker incorrectly wrote 34 instead of 44.

Amazeen died of a “malignant throat disease and congestion of the lungs” on April 20, 1880. Sadly, his wife died the day before, having contracted the disease from her husband. The two were buried side by side in a double funeral. One of their daughters was gravely ill at the time as well.

“Malignant throat disease” today sounds like cancer to us but, as cancer is not contagious, this was some other unidentified disease. Because I was curious, I asked my good friend and colleague, Dr. John Kimbrough, what he thought it might

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be. My thanks to John, a retired Air Force general surgeon and fellow Confederate specialist, who explained:

“Malignant” today is used for cancer. But in the 1800s, it could mean anything that was rapidly progressive. This description would not be cancer but is something highly contagious (bacterial infection) ... My best guess is Diphtheria, a disease rarely, if ever, seen today as there has been an effective vaccine for a long time ... Diphtheria is highly contagious through droplets (coughing, sneezing) and affects the lungs and the throat in its most severe form. One of the hallmarks of the disease is a gray-white coating that forms on the back of the throat, making it difficult to breathe. I have seen only one case of Diphtheria in my career, when I was a medical student. It is hard to forget ... I think most likely this family had Diphtheria ... But this is really only my best guess based on limited information.

Shown in Figure 8 is an unattributed newspaper clipping found on the Find A Grave website for Mrs. Amazeen, which states:

While their late home was overshadowed by the angel of death a dispatch was received from Florida announcing the sad news that Charles W. Amazeen, a grandson, had been drowned in the St. John’s River.

The brief news article announces the death of Capt. and Mrs. Amazeen, as well as their grandson. According to other sources, the newspaper account appears to have the grandson’s name wrong. Clarence Amazeen (1856-80) died in Florida, according to Find A Grave records.

The Amazeens’ final resting place is Harmony Grove



Figure 9. Amazeen tombstone for Capt. and Mrs. Amazeen, situated in the center of Harmony Grove Cemetery, Portsmouth, N.H.

Cemetery, Portsmouth, N.H. Their large family tombstone graces the center of the cemetery as shown in Figure 9. Clarence was returned from Florida to the family plot as well.

To Those Who Stand Ready

As an avid Civil War researcher, who is also an enthusiastic water-sports person, I dedicate this article to the steadfast men and women of the United States Coast Guard, formerly known as the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service.

Nor must Uncle Sam’s Web-feet be forgotten. At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay and the rapid river, but also up the narrow, muddy bayou, and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have been and made their tracks.

— President Abraham Lincoln
Aug. 26, 1863

Endnotes

- 1 William J Cooper Jr., *Jefferson Davis, American* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2000) page 3.
- 2 Dennis L. Noble, *The Historical Register of U.S. Revenue Cutter Service Officers 1790-1914*, (Washington, D.C., Coast Guard Historian’s Office, and finally promoted to captain July 11, 1864. Headquarters, 1990) page 1.
- 3 Florence Kern, *The United States Revenue Cutters in the Civil War*, (Bethesda, Md., U.S. Coast Guard, 1976)
- 4 Michael L. Strauss, *Anatomy of a Revenue Cutter: The History of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing*, <http://revfrankhughesjr.org/images/Strauss-USRC-Caleb-Cushing-History.pdf> (Feb. 23, 2006, Accessed Aug. 15, 2022)
- 5 Letter, Joseph Amazeen to Phillip F. Thomas, Jan. 1, 1861, Letters Received from Revenue Cutter Officers, 1836-1910, RG26, National Archives and Joseph Palmer, *Dictionary of Naval Terms* (London: Joseph Palmer Publishing, 1975), page 91.
- 6 Adan Grohman, “Sentinels and Saviors of the Sea – the Capture of the Revenue Cutter *Caleb Cushing*,” *Boating World*, <https://liboatingworld.com/sentinels-and-saviors-of-the-sea-the-capture-of-the-revenue-cutter-caleb-cushing/> Accessed Aug. 16, 2022.
- 7 *Boston Post*, April 21, 1880.
- 8 *Boston Post*, April 23, 1880.
9. Kern.

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Patricia A. (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965. She became actively involved in organized philately in 1969, became a dealer in 1973 and today specializes solely in Confederate stamps and postal history. She enjoys hearing from readers and may be reached at [trishkauf@comcast.net](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).

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